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ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5708

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NODIS **DECAPTIONED**

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, AR
SUBJECT: ARGENTINE HUMAN RIGHTS

REF: STATE 120048

1. I CALLED ON GENERAL VIOLA AT HIS OFFICE AT THE ARMY HEADQUARTERS AT 6:00 P.M. MAY 12. HE HAD CALLED EARLIER IN THE WEEK TO SAY THAT HE WANTED TO SEE ME AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER HIS RETURN FROM MENDOZE ON THURSDAY. HE SAID THE PURPOSE OF OUR MEETING WAS TO RELAY A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT VIDELA TO THE EFFECT THAT FOREIGN MINISTER MONTES WILL ANNOUNCE ARGENTINA'S RATIFICATION OF THE TREATY OF TLATELOLCO AT THE UN SPECIAL SESSION ON DISARMAMENT AT THE END OF MAY. PRESIDENT VIDELA WISHED TO INFORM ME THAT HE WAS DOING THIS DESPITE ITS CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL COST TO HIS ADMINISTRATION TO KEEP HIS COMMITMENT TO PRESIDENT CARTER MADE IN THEIR MEETING IN SEPTEMBER, 1977. I TOLD VIOLA I WOULD RELAY THIS INFORMATION PROMPTLY AND THAT IT WOULD BE WARMLY RECEIVED.

2. WHEN HE HAD CONCLUDED HIS MESSAGE I TOLD GENERAL VIOLA THAT I HAD BEEN AT THE POINT OF CALLING HIM FOR A MEETING WHEN HIS CALL ARRIVED. I TOLD HIM THAT THE SECRETARIES OF STATE AND DEFENSE ARE CONCERNED OVER THE DETERIORATION OF US-ARGENTINA RELATIONS. THE LEGISLATIVELY IMPOSED DEADLINE

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OF SEPTEMBER 30TH FOR THE ARMS AND OTHER SALES TO THE GOA WOULD HAVE A MAJOR SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE. IF THE TREND OF OUR RELATIONS IS TO BE HALTED AND REVERSED, SOME ACTION MUST BE

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TAKEN PROMPTLY. I TOLD HIM THAT WITH THIS IN MIND THE TWO SECRETARIES PROPOSE TO SEND A HIGH LEVEL MISSION OF OFFICERS FROM STATE AND DEFENSE TO DISCUSS AREAS OF MUTUAL INTEREST WHICH WOULD LEAD TO POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN ARGENTINA WHICH IN TURN MIGHT PERMIT THE US TO REVIEW SOME OF ITS PENDING ISSUES WITH THE GOA PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 30TH DEADLINE. IF THIS WERE POSSIBLE, IT WOULD ALSO HAVE GREAT SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE FOR ARGENTINA'S IMAGE ABROAD. WERE SUCH A MISSION TO COME, IT WOULD WISH TO DISCUSS THE NORMALIZATION OF ARREST PROCEDURES, THE HALTING OF DISAPPEARANCES AND OTHER MATTERS SUCH AS MAKING THE RIGHT OF OPTION PROGRAM FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY. WE WOULD HOPE THAT THE GOA WOULD SOON FIND IT POSSIBLE TO DEDICATE ALL THE RESOURCES OF THE GOVERNMENT TO ASSURING THAT ITS CITIZENS RECEIVE DUE PROCESS. IF THE GOA WERE PREPARED TO RECEIVE SUCH A MISSION TO DISCUSS SUCH TOPICS, WE WOULD HOPE TO MOVE RAPIDLY IN THE MAY 17 THROUGH 28 TIME FRAME AND WOULD EXPECT TO DISPATCH THE MISSION IN A MANNER WHICH WOULD OCCASION NO PUBLICITY, IF POSSIBLE.

3. GENERAL VIOLA RECEIVED THIS PROPOSAL CALMLY AND EVEN APPEARED TO WELCOME IT. HE OPENED HIS RESPONSE BY REFERRING TO INTERIOR MINISTER HARGUINDEGUY'S SPEECH TO THE POLICE CHIEFS OF MAY 3RD, IN WHICH HARGUINDEGUY TOLD THE POLICE THEY MUST STOP BEHAVING LIKE TERRORISTS AND RETURN TO THEIR NORMAL FUNCTIONS, DOING AWAY WITH THE "KIND OF BULLYING AND INSOLENT" ATTITUDE WHICH HAD DEVELOPED DURING THE FIGHT ON TERRORISM. VIOLA SAID THIS WAS AN IMPORTANT STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT POLICY WHICH IS STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY PRESIDENT VIDELA AS WELL AS BY HIMSELF. RETURN TO THE RULE OF LAW IS THE PATCH TO WHICH VIDELA IS COMMITTED AND HE IS SUPPORTED FULLY BY ME BUT NOT ALL HIGH
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GOA OFFICIALS. IT WILL NOT BE EASY AND IT WILL NOT BE RAPID BUT VIDELA IS COMMITTED TO MOVING AHEAD IN THIS FIELD. CONSEQUENTLY, IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO HAVE DISCUSSIONS SUCH AS THOSE PROPOSED. VIOLA REITERATED THAT THE ISSUE WAS NOT BLACK AND WHITE, THAT A NUMBER OF PEOPLE WOULD HAVE TO BE CONSULTED IF THE MEETINGS WERE TO BE PRODUCTIVE, AND HE, OF COURSE, WOULD HAVE TO REFER THE MATTER TO THE PRESIDENT FOR HIS DECISION. HE AGREED THAT THE DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS WAS OF CONCERN TO THE GOA AS WELL AND THAT THE SEPTEMBER 30TH DATE WOULD ALSO HAVE SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE HERE. HE BELIEVED THAT THERE WOULD BE STRONG PRESSURES IN ARGENTINA FOR RETALIATION AGAINST THE USA SHOULD AN EMBARGO COME INTO EFFECT UNDER CURRENT CONDITIONS. HE ALSO EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE MAKEUP AND LEVEL OF THE PROPOSED

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MISSION.

4. VIOLA SAID HE IS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT VIDELA ON SUNDAY, MAY 14 AND WILL INFORM ME OF THE PRESIDENT'S DECISION THE FOLLOWING DAY. I AM ENCOURAGED BY VIOLA'S POSITIVE RESPONSE AND I AM IMPRESSED BY HIS ATTITUDE. HE SAID THAT THE GOA IS PREPARED TO DEAL WITH US AND INTEND TO DEAL IN GOOD FAITH. THIS ATMOSPHERE IS VERY PROMISING.

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